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INTELLIGENCE

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MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, PRODUCT REVIEW DIVISION, IC STAFF

SUBJECT: "Report on Intelligence Alert Memorana" of 1 September, 1975

(S) The IC Staff draft report is an excellent piece of work. It seems suitable for publication in the RONI and is a good model for review of other current intelligence products. We have several informal comments on the report which may prove useful:

-- Our experience indicates that DOD consumers would far rather have too much warning than too little. Mr. Ellsworth has made this point formally in the NSCIC/WG.

-- The Community is too sensitive to the false alarm issue and under-estimates the extent to which it saturates senior decision makers with duplicative and conflicting current intelligence. We have recently surveyed senior OSD officials and no official surveyed reads the entire range of national dailies in any form: further those dailies he does read are usually heavily filtered by a member of his staff. The Alert Memorandum is the only way that the Community has to be sure of reaching senior consumers, and making its reporting stand out as important.

-- The Community over-values coordination. It takes too much time for the good it does, and introduces far too many filters. Any member of the intelligence community should be encouraged to issue an Alert Memorandum, and this uncoordinated mode should be, the rule whenever the information is even remotely time sensitive.

-- It is essential that the Alert Memorandum should be contingency-oriented, and not focus on a single set of possible events. It should specify probabilities, using a number in most cases. It should specifically state the intelligence indicators involved in a form separate from the comment or analysis in the text. Uncertainties and limitations in the intelligence should be clearly specified.

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-- The source and time of origin for all data and indicators in the memorandum should be clearly stated. The consumer must know how the timing and reliability of the intelligence data used in the memorandum relates to that he gets through the media and the cable traffic.

-- Alert Memoranda should be terminated and their probable time span should be clearly stated in the memoranda. The flood of current intelligence and news reporting coming into senior personnel is so great that they must know when the Alert Memoranda ceases to be effective, and have a way to know they should continue to give their attention to the problem until that time.

-- All intelligence and operations centers should receive all Alert Memoranda and be notified automatically when such Memoranda are in preparation. Failure to do so should be regarded as a serious a warning failure as any other critical mistake in intelligence management. The system must tilt towards over-distribution and over circulation to Embassies and Commands. It is extremely difficult to measure the scope of the contingencies an Alert Memoranda will cover, and it seems critical to avoid cases where key U.S. government facilities failed to get the word because of inadequate circulation.

(U) Your staff brought all of these points out well in its report. I feel, however, that it is important that your consumers should make their views clear. Hopefully, some consensus can then be developed and translated into formal guidance. It would be a shame if it takes another warning failure to get action on the issues raised in your report.



Anthony H. Cordesman
Chief, Product Evaluation Division
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